

1 **Title:** Ecological memory mitigates negative impacts of disturbance on biomass production in  
2 benthic diatom metacommunities

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17

18 **Abstract**

19           Disturbance events to coastal habitats such as extreme heat events, storms, or floods  
20 have increased in magnitude and frequency in recent years due to anthropogenic climate  
21 change and the destruction of habitats. These events constitute a major threat to many  
22 ecological communities and global biodiversity. Disturbance history influences ecosystem  
23 response to novel disturbances such that communities that have previously been exposed to  
24 disturbances should be more resilient to new disturbances compared to previously sheltered  
25 communities. This principle is defined as ecological memory. Resilience should also increase  
26 with access to a larger species pool, because a larger species pool increases species and  
27 response diversity of a community. One possibility of increasing the local species pool is  
28 connectivity via adequate dispersal between habitat patches with different species  
29 compositions in metacommunities. In a laboratory experiment, we exposed benthic diatom  
30 communities of different origin to a mechanical disturbance, simulated dispersal in half of the  
31 communities, and measured their chlorophyll *a* concentration over time. The local diatom  
32 communities originated from different locations on an intertidal flat that varied in  
33 hydrodynamic exposure history. Hydrodynamic exposure disturbs the sediment, and thereby  
34 determines sediment properties and the composition of intertidal diatom communities. In the  
35 experiment, disturbance negatively affected chlorophyll *a* concentration across all treatments.  
36 However, the response to disturbance depended on the ecological memory of the  
37 communities; the more exposed areas the communities originated from, the less negative was  
38 the effect of the mechanical disturbance. Interestingly, dispersal did not mitigate the negative  
39 impacts of disturbance in any of the communities. Our results highlight the importance of  
40 ecological memory for ecosystem functioning and demonstrate the limitations of patch  
41 connectivity to alleviate the impacts of disturbance events in metacommunities.

42 **Keywords:** dispersal; resilience; microalgae; origin; species composition

## 43 **Introduction**

44 Global climate change and habitat destruction have altered many ecosystems which poses  
45 an urgent threat to many ecological communities and thus to global biodiversity (IPCC 2014).  
46 In addition to increased average global temperatures, the severity and frequency of extreme  
47 weather events such as storms and floods are expected to increase in the future (Harley et al.  
48 2006, IPCC 2014). These extreme events will severely affect coastal areas, including the  
49 North Sea coast (Beniston et al. 2007), where they disturb and redistribute surface sediments  
50 on intertidal flats (Bartholomä et al. 2009). Increased sediment dynamics caused by storms  
51 and floods will most likely affect intertidal production negatively, because sediment erosion is  
52 the main abiotic constraint for autotrophic organisms living in and on surface sediments (de  
53 Jonge and van Beusekom 1995, Donadi et al. 2013a). Resilience in the face of disturbances is  
54 crucial for the survival of ecological communities and the maintenance of ecological  
55 functions in our fast-changing world (Oliver et al. 2015, König et al. 2019).

56 Species diversity affects ecosystem functioning (Hooper et al. 2005, Cardinale et al. 2012,  
57 Gonzalez et al. 2020) and influences ecosystem responses to disturbances by determining the  
58 system's response diversity and resilience (Elmqvist et al. 2003, Mori et al. 2013). Higher  
59 response diversity increases the resilience of communities and thus assures the maintenance  
60 of ecosystem functioning during and after disturbance events (Elmqvist et al. 2003, Mori et al.  
61 2013, Carrara et al. 2015, Oliver et al. 2015). Species and response diversity are increased in  
62 communities with access to a larger, regional species pool, compared to local isolated  
63 communities, if the different local communities have varying species compositions (Altermatt  
64 et al. 2011, Cosentino et al. 2011). Individual local communities that are connected via  
65 dispersal (i.e. the passive or active movement of individuals from one local patch to another)  
66 form metacommunities (Gilpin and Hanski 1991, Wilson 1992, Leibold et al. 2004, Holyoak  
67 et al. 2005). Increased species and response diversity in metacommunities are mainly caused

68 by the sampling effect (Loreau and Hector 2001) and the spatial insurance effect (Loreau et  
69 al. 2003, Leibold and Chase 2018). Both these principles are based in the theory that access to  
70 a regional species pool with diverse traits increases the probability of local patch colonization  
71 by superior species that can maximize ecosystem functioning. In addition, mass effects  
72 (Mouquet and Loreau 2003) that lead to the constant replenishment of biomass from the  
73 regional species pool, and thus supply regional dominant species to local patches, can aid in  
74 the resilience of communities.

75 Previous states and experiences can affect future responses of communities, a process  
76 coined as “ecological memory” (Padisak 1992, Ogle et al. 2015). Ecological memory can  
77 manifest in different ways including the retention of certain physiological, behavioral,  
78 morphological, molecular, or ecological attributes that were shaped by previous exposure to  
79 specific conditions (Schweiger et al. 2019). These retained attributes can greatly affect how  
80 communities cope with novel disturbances such that communities that previously experienced  
81 disturbances are often more resilient towards novel disturbances (Bengtsson et al. 2003,  
82 Johnstone et al. 2016, Hughes et al. 2019). In this study, we focus on an ecological,  
83 community-level component of ecological memory, i.e. how species composition, which was  
84 shaped by past experiences, influences the response of the community to a novel disturbance.

85 Coastal areas are among the most productive ecosystems on the planet and have great  
86 ecological and economic value (Heip et al. 1995, Harley et al. 2006). Intertidal mudflats  
87 harbor a multitude of different species from all domains of life. Microalgae are the main  
88 primary producers fueling these diverse benthic food webs (Markert et al. 2013, Rigolet et al.  
89 2014). Benthic microalgae contribute up to 50% of total primary production in some intertidal  
90 areas where they can form extensive biofilms on surface sediments (Underwood and  
91 Kromkamp 1999, Decho 2000, Stal 2003, Kromkamp et al. 2006). Benthic microalgae  
92 biomass and diversity is regulated by many different factors, among them resource

93 availability and grazing (Underwood and Kromkamp 1999, Weerman et al. 2011a, 2011b).  
94 The presence of ecosystem engineers such as mussels or oysters also greatly influences  
95 benthic microalgae biomass and species composition (Donadi et al. 2013a, Engel et al. 2017).  
96 By creating solid structures on intertidal flats, mussel and oyster beds create clear gradients in  
97 hydrodynamic conditions and sediment properties (e.g. sediment grain size and organic matter  
98 content), which affect species composition and biomass of many organisms including benthic  
99 diatoms (Widdows and Brinsley 2002, Donadi et al. 2013b, van der Zee et al. 2012).

100 In a microcosm experiment with intertidal benthic diatoms, we tested the importance of  
101 ecological memory and access to a regional species pool for the community's resilience to  
102 recurring disturbance events. The diatom communities originated from sites with different  
103 histories of hydrodynamic stress. We exposed the diatom communities to mechanical  
104 disturbance (physical destruction of biofilm), simulated dispersal between the communities  
105 with different origin, and measured their chlorophyll *a* concentration (i.e. biomass) over time.

106 We hypothesized that: (i) The communities originating from locations with different  
107 histories of hydrodynamic disturbance had different species compositions; that (ii) the origin  
108 of the species communities from the natural gradient of hydrodynamic disturbance determine  
109 their resilience to mechanical disturbance (historically higher levels of hydrodynamic stress  
110 correlate with high resilience to experimental disturbance); and that (iii) dispersal, through  
111 enabling patch-connectivity, mitigates negative impacts of disturbance in the  
112 metacommunities.

## 113 **Material and methods**

### 114 *Study organisms and local conditions*

115 We collected benthic diatom communities from three sites on the mudflat off the coast  
116 of Schiermonnikoog island, the Wadden Sea, in October of 2015, immediately before the start  
117 of the experiment. The three sites were on a transect spanning from the coast seaward and

118 crossing an intertidal mussel bed. Due to the crossing of the mussel bed, the sites differed in  
119 exposure to hydrodynamic stress conditions and consequently sediment characteristics (Table  
120 1). Site 1 was unprotected from hydrodynamic stress and in a sandy area coastward of the  
121 mussel bed. Site 2 was seaward of the mussel bed with intermediate protection and muddy  
122 sediment. Site 3 (hereafter referred to as “low hydrodynamic stress”) was on a mussel bed,  
123 where hydrodynamic stress was reduced and the sediment in the bare patches between  
124 mussels was muddy and fine grained.

125 At each site, we collected the top 0.5 cm surface sediment of an area of 0.5 m<sup>2</sup> to  
126 extract the benthic diatom communities to use in the experiment. Additionally, at each site we  
127 took sediment cores (diameter: 26 mm) to measure chlorophyll *a* (three cores of 0.2 cm depth  
128 pooled onto a piece of aluminum foil and stored in a sealed plastic bag on ice), organic matter  
129 content at two different depths: 2 cm and 0.2 cm depth (i.e. shallow OM); placed into sealed  
130 plastic bags and stored on ice), and benthic diatom species composition (core with 2 cm  
131 depth; placed in sealed plastic bag and stored on ice). We also measured the level of  
132 hydrodynamic disturbance at each site by placing dissolution plasters out for two tidal cycles  
133 and measuring the dry weight of the plasters before and after exposure to the tides. We  
134 transported all samples in cool boxes back to the laboratory (<24h).

135 In the laboratory, we extracted the motile benthic diatoms from the large area and from  
136 the cores separately by spreading out the sediment and placing two layers of lens cleaning  
137 tissue onto the sediment. After 5 h of exposure to light, we collected the top tissue and rinsed  
138 the diatoms off into culture bottles with sterile filtered North Sea water. We stored the  
139 samples from the large area in the dark at 19°C until the start of the experiment (<4h). We  
140 fixed the core samples in Lugol’s iodine and determined species composition with the  
141 Utermöhl counting technique (Utermöhl 1958) under an inverted microscope. We freeze-dried  
142 the sediment chlorophyll *a* samples, and subsequently measured chlorophyll *a* concentrations  
143 using a fluorometer (Trilogy) after acetone extraction (90%, dark, -20°C, 48 h) and methods

144 described by Jeffrey and Humphrey (1975). The organic matter content was determined  
145 through Loss on Ignition by burning oven dried organic matter samples (48h, 60°C) in a  
146 muffle kiln (4h, 550°C).

#### 147 *Set-up and sampling*

148 We set up the experiment in a climate room with controlled temperature (19°C) and  
149 light levels (10.8  $\mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$  and 14:10 light-dark cycle). We used 60-mL-culture flasks  
150 (TPP, filter screw cap) as microcosms for this experiment and 40 mL sterile filtered North Sea  
151 water (N:Si:P added for final concentrations of 40:40:2.7  $\mu\text{M}$ ) as the medium. We carefully  
152 exchanged 20 mL of the medium every third day over the course of the experiment to avoid  
153 nutrient limitation.

154 For our fully factorial experiment, we constructed 54 metacommunities out of 162  
155 local communities. We constructed the metacommunities by connecting three local  
156 communities with different origin along the hydrodynamic stress gradient so that each  
157 metacommunity contained one local community of high, medium, and low hydrodynamic  
158 stress. We adjusted the inocula so that all bottles had similar initial diatom abundances. We  
159 applied three different mechanical disturbance levels to the communities: no, intermediate,  
160 and frequent. We administered disturbance by scraping the bottom of the culture flask with a  
161 cell scraper every fourth day for intermediate and every other day for frequent disturbance  
162 levels. The no-disturbance treatment was not subject to scraping. Each local community  
163 within a metacommunity was subject to the same disturbance treatment. Half of the local  
164 communities were assigned to a dispersal treatment, in which we administered dispersal every  
165 other day. To administer dispersal, we first carefully turned the bottles three times to suspend  
166 the more loosely attached diatoms into the medium. We then pipetted three mL solution (i.e.  
167 medium plus suspended diatoms) out of each of the three bottles per metacommunity into a  
168 sterile beaker. In the beaker, we mixed the three local community solutions and returned three  
169 mL of this mixture into the respective bottles of the same metacommunity. The communities

170 not subject to dispersal, were treated similarly to the dispersal treatment with the exception  
171 that no culture was removed from or added to the bottles. This ensured that the dispersal  
172 treatment did not affect boundary layer and nutrient uptake dynamics. The experiment ran for  
173 29 days and we sampled destructively three times (i.e. removed the entire flask from the  
174 experiment after two, three, and four weeks of growth). Each treatment combination  
175 (including the three sampling times) was replicated three times.

176 On the three sampling days, we scraped the biofilm off the bottom of the culture flasks  
177 and homogenized it in the medium by shaking the flask. We filtered 7 mL of the suspended  
178 cultures over GF/F filters to determine chlorophyll *a* concentration of the samples. We  
179 measured chlorophyll *a* concentration with a fluorimeter (Trilogy) after extraction with 90%  
180 acetone. We calculated regional chlorophyll *a* concentration by summing the separate values  
181 from each local community within a metacommunity.

## 182 *Statistical analysis*

183 Our fully crossed design included the fixed factors sampling day (three levels: 2, 3, 4),  
184 origin (three levels: low hydrodynamic stress, medium hydrodynamic stress, and high  
185 hydrodynamic stress), disturbance treatment (three levels: no, intermediate, frequent), and  
186 dispersal treatment (two levels: no-dispersal and dispersal). We ran a GLM including all  
187 factors and combinations to test the effect of sampling day, origin, disturbance, and dispersal  
188 on local chlorophyll *a* concentration. Likewise, on the regional scale, we constructed a model  
189 testing the effect of sampling day, disturbance, and dispersal on chlorophyll *a* concentration.  
190 Subsequently, we compared treatment levels of the significant main effects (origin and  
191 disturbance) with Tukey HSD post-hoc tests. All analysis were done in R v.3.4.1 (R Core  
192 Team 2017).

193

## 194 **Results**

195 *Local conditions at origin and initial species composition*



196 As expected, the extraction sites of benthic diatoms varied in their characteristics  
197 relating to hydrodynamic stress exposure and thus their sediment properties (Table 1). The  
198 unprotected Site 1 (hereafter referred to as “high hydrodynamic stress”) had the highest  
199 erosion, but lowest organic matter content and chlorophyll *a* concentration (Table 1). Site 2  
200 with intermediate protection (hereafter referred to as “medium hydrodynamic stress”) had  
201 intermediate erosion and organic matter content, but high chlorophyll *a* concentration (Table  
202 1). The most protected Site 3 (hereafter referred to as “low hydrodynamic stress”) had the  
203 lowest erosion, but the highest organic matter content and chlorophyll *a* concentration (Table  
204 1).

205 The different communities from different origin along the hydrodynamic stress  
206 gradient also had varying benthic diatom species composition (Fig. 1). Site “high  
207 hydrodynamic stress” was dominated by several larger *Navicula Sp.*, whereas Site “low  
208 hydrodynamic stress” had a high relative abundance of the smallest *Navicula Sp* (Fig. 1). Site  
209 “medium hydrodynamic stress” was dominated by *Pleurosigma aestuarii*, a very large  
210 sigmoidal species (Fig. 1).

### 211 *Experimental results*

212 The origin of the diatom communities along the hydrodynamic stress gradient  
213 determined the response of the communities to mechanical stress (significant interaction  
214 effect between origin and mechanical disturbance:  $F_{4,105}=8.54$ ,  $p<0.01$ ; Fig. 2). Mechanical  
215 disturbance significantly decreased local chlorophyll *a* concentrations in all communities  
216 (significant main effect of disturbance:  $F_{2,105}=45.63$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with both disturbance treatments  
217 (i.e. intermediate (I) and frequent (F) mechanical disturbance) having significantly lower  
218 chlorophyll *a* concentrations than the no-disturbance (N) treatment (Tukey HSD: N-I and N-F  
219  $p<0.01$ ; Fig. 2). However, the higher hydrodynamic stress regime the communities originated  
220 from, the more resilient they were to the mechanical disturbance treatment. On average, the

221 mechanical disturbance decreased chlorophyll *a* in the communities with high hydrodynamic  
222 stress at origin by 29%, with medium hydrodynamic stress at origin by 44%, and with low  
223 hydrodynamic stress at origin by 74% (Tukey HSD origin: high-medium, high-low, and  
224 medium-low  $p < 0.01$ ; Fig. 2).

225 Local chlorophyll *a* was also significantly affected by interactive effects of origin of  
226 the community and dispersal ( $F_{2,105} = 5.3$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). While dispersal decreased chlorophyll *a*  
227 concentrations in the local communities originating from highest hydrodynamic stress, it did  
228 not affect or slightly increased chlorophyll *a* concentrations in the other communities (origin  
229 from medium and low hydrodynamic stress, respectively) (Fig. 2). There was no significant  
230 effect of sampling day (Table A1).

231 Disturbance significantly decreased regional chlorophyll *a* concentration ( $F_{2,35} =$   
232  $21.08$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; N:  $313.67 \pm 28.29$ ; I:  $186.52 \pm 13.60$ ; F:  $153.20 \pm 7.51$ ; Tukey HSD: N-I and N-F  
233  $p < 0.01$ ; Fig. 2), while dispersal and sampling day did not have a significant effect on regional  
234 chlorophyll *a* concentration (Fig. 2; Table A2).

## 235 Discussion

236 Our results demonstrate that the biological properties determined by the origin of the  
237 experimental communities along a natural hydrodynamic stress gradient determined their  
238 response to new disturbances. The communities with different histories of hydrodynamic  
239 stress at origin had different species composition (supporting hypothesis 1). Communities  
240 originating from sites that naturally experienced higher levels of hydrodynamic stress had a  
241 higher resilience to experimental disturbance than those originating from sites with lower  
242 levels of hydrodynamic disturbance (supporting hypothesis 2). However, dispersal did not  
243 mitigate negative impacts of disturbance in our experimental metacommunities (rejecting  
244 hypothesis 3). Thus, the different communities had different biological properties relating to  
245 ecological memory (species composition, diversity, and traits); and the ecological memory of

246 the communities shaped by higher levels of disturbance at origin were more resilient to new  
247 disturbances than the communities with lower levels of disturbance at origin.

248 The variation in species composition at origin (Fig. 1) was likely caused by the differences  
249 in local conditions on the intertidal flat including hydrodynamic stress and resulting sediment  
250 characteristics (Table 1). Communities previously exposed to higher levels of hydrodynamic  
251 stress are probably more resilient to novel disturbances because they are inhabited by species  
252 that compensate the disturbance by individual resilience or by rapid growth rates due to  
253 previous need for this. Changes in species composition as response to past states is part of the  
254 ecological memory of communities. In our study, the ecological memory of the communities  
255 originating from the site with high hydrodynamic stress likely contributed to mitigating the  
256 negative impact of a novel disturbance on ecosystem functioning. Several other studies also  
257 show that ecological memory increases the resilience of communities to novel disturbances in  
258 different systems, including terrestrial plants (Johnstone et al. 2016), aquatic plants (Sterk et  
259 al. 2016), corals (Hughes et al. 2019), and archaea (Beer et al. 2014). However, it is important  
260 to realize that ecological memory is not a universal insurance for resilience, especially  
261 considering the projected increase in magnitude and frequency of extreme climate events in  
262 the future (Harley et al. 2006, IPCC 2014), which will make disturbance regimes more  
263 unpredictable. For example, a recent study by Jacquet and Altermatt (2020) shows that above  
264 a certain threshold of past disturbance frequency and intensity, legacy effects can lead to  
265 negative effects of past disturbances on present species diversity and ecosystem functioning.  
266 The positive effect of ecological memory also depends on species co-tolerance. Only when  
267 species' initial tolerance and tolerance to additional stressors are positively correlated can the  
268 impact of an additional stressor be reduced and lead to "stress-induced community tolerance"  
269 (Vinebrooke et al. 2004). More research is needed to assess in which cases the positive effect

270 of ecological memory surpasses the negative effect of legacy effects and what other  
271 components of ecological memory are important for community resilience.

272 Previous studies have shown that microalgal species composition and biomass  
273 production are dependent on many abiotic and biotic variables and that they are tightly linked  
274 to sediment grain size (Cahoon et al. 1999, Thornton et al. 2002, Du et al. 2009). Even though  
275 we did not directly measure sediment grain size in this study, visual observations showed that  
276 the sandy site with high hydrodynamic stress and low organic matter content had larger grain  
277 size. Other studies confirm that locations with high hydrodynamic forcing have larger  
278 sediment grain size and lower clay content and therefore are less muddy (de Jong & de Jonge  
279 1995, Thornton et al. 2002, Méléder et al 2007). Smaller species should be able to recover  
280 faster after disturbances, because they have higher growth and division rates (Finkel et al.  
281 2010). Therefore, it would be logical to find that communities with smaller species can  
282 withstand disturbances better, and thus in our study we would expect to find smaller species  
283 in the more highly disturbed sites. We observed the opposite pattern. Species from the high  
284 and medium stressed sites were generally larger than those from the low stressed site,  
285 independent of sediment grain size at origin. Since in our study the finer grained sediments  
286 were in the location of the mussel bed, it is unclear if the sediment determined diatom cell  
287 size, or if other factors played into the size selection of species. For example, selective  
288 grazing by organisms inhabiting the mussel bed could have influenced benthic diatom species  
289 composition and thus possibly led to size discrimination and the presence of predominantly  
290 small species in the fine-grained sediment (D'Hondt et al. 2018). In addition, diatoms are  
291 generally characterized by high growth rates and maximum nutrient uptake rates, because  
292 they are adapted to rapidly responding to nutrient pulses in coastal areas (Litchman et al.  
293 2007). Therefore, the metabolic size scaling might not express in this group of diatoms.

294 Alternatively, this scaling might be masked by local adaptation to hydrodynamic stress in the  
295 communities investigated here and thus overridden by ecological memory.

296 Contrary to expectations, dispersal did not lead to increased chlorophyll *a*  
297 concentration on the local nor regional scale, independent of the disturbance level. In the  
298 community originating from high stress hydrodynamic conditions, dispersal even decreased  
299 chlorophyll *a* compared to the no-dispersal treatment (Fig. 2). Interestingly, the variability of  
300 replicates within the dispersal treatment of the no-disturbance communities was high,  
301 meaning that the response of these replicates was not uniform. Contrary to the present results,  
302 other studies have shown that dispersal indeed “rescues” disturbed communities (Altermatt et  
303 al. 2011, Symons & Arnott 2013, Rosset et al. 2017). Through dispersal, communities gain  
304 access to a larger species pool on the regional scale so that there should be more species  
305 present that have the ideal traits for the novel situation after a disturbance. However, in our  
306 experiment, even the intermediate disturbance level seemed too severe, or the dispersal  
307 frequency too low, to initiate a rescue effect. Another explanation for our results could be that  
308 in our experiment all local communities in a disturbed metacommunity were exposed to the  
309 same disturbance level (i.e. the disturbance was a regional event), whereas in nature and in  
310 other experiments, the regional species pool oftentimes includes disturbed and undisturbed  
311 patches (e.g. Altermatt et al. 2011) so that within the metacommunity dispersal from the  
312 undisturbed to disturbed patches can lead to a “rescue effect”. In future experiments,  
313 including undisturbed “rescue” patches would be a useful addition to the experimental set-up.

314 Our experiment shows that initial community composition (specifically relating to  
315 ecological memory) largely drives ecosystem functions, despite the presence of other well-  
316 known structuring mechanisms, such as dispersal. This exemplifies the important role of  
317 species identities for ecosystem functioning in (meta)communities and highlights the crucial  
318 need for protecting biodiversity in natural systems.

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489 **Tables**

490 **Table 1.** Site characteristics of the sample origins. (Origin = hydrodynamic stress exposure at  
491 origin, Sed. = sediment type). Erosion was measured with dissolution plasters and is used as a  
492 proxy for hydrodynamic forcing. Organic matter content in the sediment was calculated for  
493 two different depths: 2 cm (Organic Matter) and 0.2 cm (Shallow OM).

Site	Coordinates	Origin	Sed.	Erosion (%)	Chlorophyll <i>a</i> (µg/g)	Organic Matter (%)	Shallow OM (%)
1	N53.47090, E6.22400	High	Sand	5.10	21.77	0.70	1.00
2	N53.46686, E6.22469	Medium	Mud	3.33	259.03	2.48	11.74
3	N53.46776, E6.22462	Low	Mud	2.77	293.40	10.04	12.76

494

495

496 **Table 2.** Abbreviations as used in Fig. 1, names, and average cell size of the most abundant  
497 diatom species.

<b>ID</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Cell size (<math>\mu\text{m}^3</math>)</b>
<b>AMP</b>	<i>Amphora Sp. 1</i>	787.92
<b>CYL</b>	<i>Cylindrotheca closterium</i>	33.16
<b>GYA</b>	<i>Gyrosigma acuminatum</i>	1440.38
<b>HAN</b>	<i>Hantzschia Sp. 1</i>	612.90
<b>NAF</b>	<i>Navicula forcipata</i>	1563.89
<b>NAV II</b>	<i>Navicula Sp. 1</i>	49.74
<b>NAV III</b>	<i>Navicula Sp. 2</i>	146.92
<b>NAV IV</b>	<i>Navicula Sp. 3</i>	730.88
<b>NAV X</b>	<i>Navicula Sp. 4</i>	730.88
<b>NITZ I</b>	<i>Nitzschia Sp. 1</i>	193.73
<b>PLE</b>	<i>Pleurosigma aestuarii</i>	4783.61

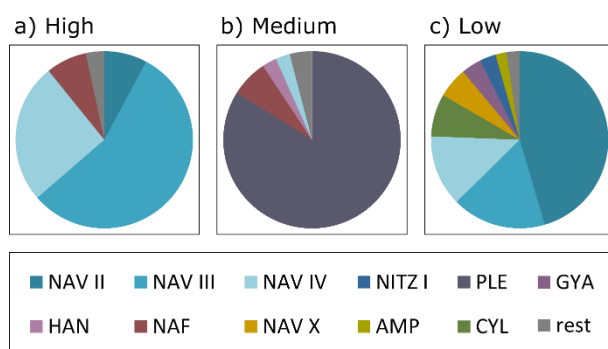
498

499 **Figure Legends**

500 **Fig. 1.** Species composition at different extraction sites (origin). High, medium, and low refer  
501 to hydrodynamic stress conditions at the origin (see Table 1). For names and average cell sizes  
502 of the different species see Table 2.

503 **Fig. 2.** Chlorophyll *a* concentration in the different treatments for each local community with  
504 different origin along a hydrodynamic stress gradient and for the regional scale. (a) High  
505 hydrodynamic stress at origin, b) medium hydrodynamic stress at origin, c) low  
506 hydrodynamic stress at origin, d) regional. Solid circles represent no-dispersal treatments and  
507 open circles represent dispersal treatments. No (green), intermediate (orange), and frequent  
508 (purple) correspond to the levels of the disturbance treatment in the experiment.

509 **Figures**

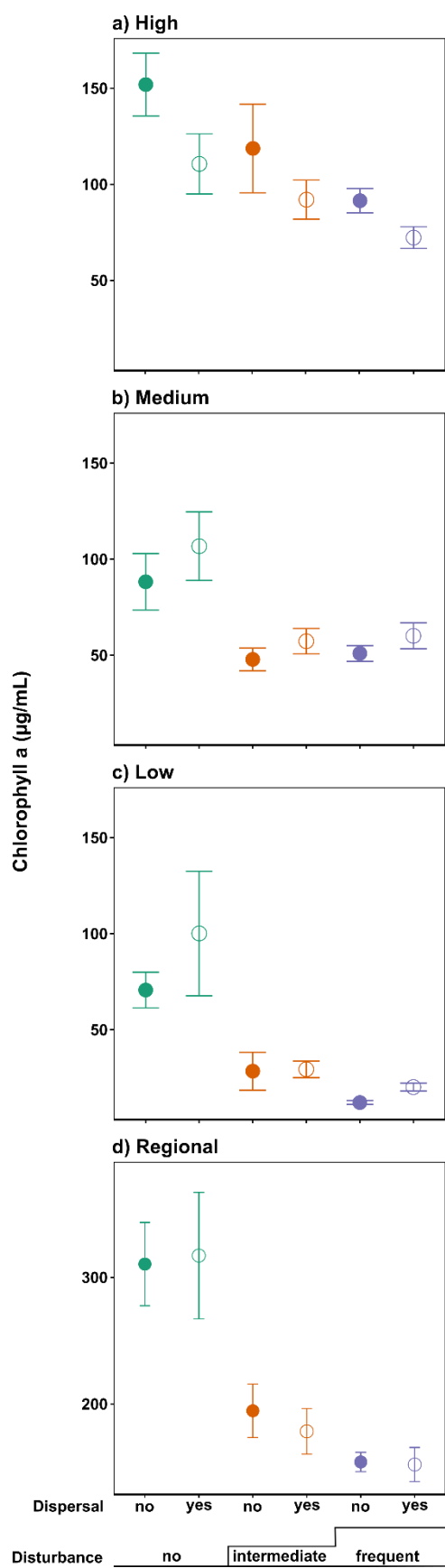


510

511 Fig. 1.

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513

514 Fig. 2.